

ARCHBISHOPS OF CANTERBURY.

(Continued.)

MELANCHOLY state of things took place on the death of Archbishop Fitz-Walter. In all too eager haste some of the younger members of the convent church of Canterbury elected their superior, whose name was Reginald, to be archbishop. This they did without consulting the king, and Reginald was sent to Rome to gain, if possible, the consent of the pope, and so procure an archbishop without any reference to royalty. But when Reginald and his attendants were well on their way these monks began to fear the wrath of John, and requested him to nominate a successor for the archbishopric. This the king gladly did, and recommended John de Gray, Bishop of Norwich, who, accordingly, was elected unanimously by the frightened monks of Canterbury, some of whom were sent to the pope to announce the happy event and ask for its confirmation.

But while they were on their way the suffragan bishops, who claimed to have a voice in the election of the man who was to be their head, felt so indignant at being ignored that they, on their part, sent a deputation to the pope to protest against the election of John de Gray.

The pope at this time was the famous Lothaire, better known as Innocent III., a man bent on obtaining all the power over the kings and princes of Europe that he could possibly get. To him first came the pompous Reginald, who, contrary to his instructions, had surrounded himself with *the grandeur of an archbishop*. He demanded recognition as such. The pope did not like the appearance of things. His suspicions were aroused. He told the ambitious aspirant to archiepiscopal honors, somewhat to his dismay, that he would take time to consider the matter. Then came a second deputation, stating that John de Gray, Bishop of Norwich, had been elected. The pope was confused. What could it all mean? He determined to suspend judgment for a time long when, lo! a third deputation came to say that there had been no legal election made at all.

The pope at once took in the situation, and determined to turn the whole matter to his own advantage. Clearly, they were in doubt in England over the matter of selecting a new archbishop. He would therefore grasp the whole situation for himself, and make an appointment without any reference whatever to the King of England, his monks, or his bishops. He had at his court at the time a very estimable man—an Englishman who had been educated at Paris—whose name was Stephen Langton. He told the monks of Canterbury and the other members of the three deputations that had come

to him to meet together and elect Stephen Langton to the archbishopric. The unfortunate monks and others dreaded the wrath of their king, but they feared also to incur the anger of the pope; but as the pope happened to be the nearest they yielded to him.

When King John was told of what the pope had done he swore "by God's teeth" that no Stephen Langton should ever be forced upon him, let the pope do what he might.

Here was open war. The pope could not recede. John must be brought to terms.

There were three engines of power that the popes had in those days to bring obstinate kings to their senses. One was the interdict, the next was excommunication, and the third was deposition.

Innocent tried the mildest first. All England was placed under an interdict. That meant that the churches were to be closed, the services suspended, no clerical duties whatever performed. But this was not obeyed by all the clergy. Some, through loyalty to their own king, continued their duties as usual.

Finding after two or three years that the interdict did not accomplish the desired result, the pope excommunicated John. The king was truly alarmed at this, but when he found that his barons and people remained faithful to him, notwithstanding the excommunication, he became as defiant towards the pope as ever. King John had more loyalty and love shown him by his own people than he really deserved, for he was a man of profligate habits, who did not scruple to use his high position to lead astray the wives and daughters of the highest in the land and of those most devoted to himself. Had he been a man of upright character he might have been one of the greatest reformers known to history; but, though resolute and brave, he lacked the quality of perseverance and of upright dealing.

The pope, chafing at the determined obstinacy of the King of England, at last fired his heaviest gun and pronounced him deposed. That meant that any king who liked might step in and take his crown. And even here the people of England did not desert their king. In splendid numbers coming from the loom and the plough, from the cottage and the castle, they rallied round him, and the King of England stood forth to defy the world to take the crown from his head, even though deposed by the Pope of Rome.

Well had it been if he had stood firm here, but his poor superstition made him, all at once, collapse and yield to the pope. It was due, some said, to a prophecy which he heard some one make, that he would not be king at Ascensiontide.

Whatever the reason, he yielded and swore fealty to the pope.

During all this time Stephen Langton re-